

How does it work?

- Wastewater leaving your house travels into your septic tank. Wastewater includes water draining from your sinks, toilets, bath tubs, dishwasher, and laundry machine.
- In the septic tank, heavy solids sink to the bottom and form a sludge layer. Light solids float to the top and form a scum layer.
- While waste is stored in the tank, bacteria digest and eliminate some of the solid material. Solids that aren't digested build up and **must be pumped out**.
- When wastewater enters the tank from the house, an equal amount of liquid waste is pushed out of the tank into the drainfield. Water exiting the tank is called *effluent*.
- Effluent flows into the drainfield and enters the surrounding soil. The soil acts as a natural filter as the effluent leaches downwards. Most effluent will eventually reach groundwater sources.

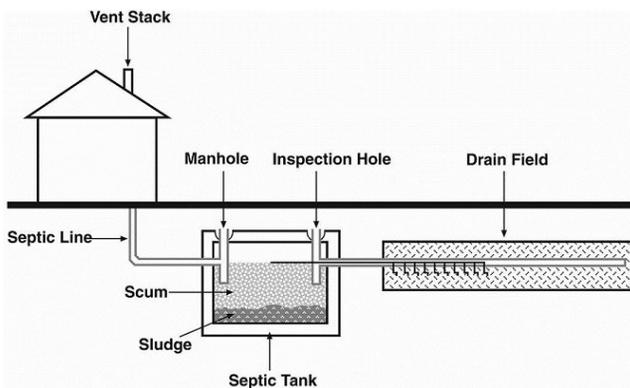


Image taken from IDEQ's "A Homeowner's Guide To Septic Systems, 2001."

Get More Info



Idaho Rural
Water Association

www.idahoruralwater.com
(208) 343-7001

Idaho Department of
Environmental Quality

State office
(208)373-0502

[http://www.deq.idaho.gov/water-quality/wastewater/
septic-systems.aspx](http://www.deq.idaho.gov/water-quality/wastewater/septic-systems.aspx)

Idaho Public Health Departments
Contact your regional office!

Or visit:

www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov

Understanding your septic system

How does it work?

What do I need to do?

Why is proper care important?

*Keep your family and
your neighbors safe!
It's up to you!*

Why is proper care important?

- Avoid contributing harmful bacteria and chemicals to your local drinking water source!
- Essential to protect your family and community.
- Avoid backups of waste into your home or underground. These events can pose a significant health hazard and are costly to repair.

Proper care Procedures

- Pump your septic tank every 3 to 5 years, or more often if you have a large household
- Only a licensed septic tank pumper should perform this task.
- Do not drive heavy machinery over your tank or drain field.
- Do not engage in heavy watering or drainage over your drainfield.

What is YOUR responsibility as a septic tank owner?

- **Do not flush** the following items down the toilet: diapers, feminine hygiene products, Q-tips, baby wipes (**even if they say “flushable”!!**), towels or rags, socks or underwear, paint, condoms, old toiletries or bathing products, pharmaceuticals, or animal waste.
- Avoid dumping fats, oils, and grease down your kitchen sink or other drains. These are materials that can clog your pipes and cause a backup. Instead, pour them into a jar or can and dispose of them in the trash.
- Avoid washing multiple loads of laundry in one day or using an excess amount of water at one time. This can overflow your tank and cause harmful leaching in your drain field.